

in the farms and orchards of Wadi Far'a, al-Auja, Jericho, etc. Other refugees, who had more funds and skills, eventually acquired title deeds and became small holders. Even fewer succeeded in becoming landlords, leasing tracts of their land on a share basis to less fortunate refugees.

The Evolution of Agrarian Relations in the Jordan Valley

Although one of the first areas of sedentary agricultural activity in antiquity, the Jordan Valley became the domain of semi-nomadic tribes for most of its recent history.¹ In the late Ottoman period an attempt was made, both for reasons of political stabilization and to increase state revenue, to delineate areas of tribal boundaries and the establishment of a series of irrigation canals -- on both sides of the River Jordan. Water rights were a main source of conflict between tribes, and agriculture until the 1930's was predominantly based on grazing. Wheat (the chief crop) was grown for subsistence and a limited amount of vegetables, mostly in the Wadi al-Zarqa region was marketed through the trading center at Salt (Government of Jordan, 1961:135).

Most lands at the turn of the century were either Waqf (whose revenue went to religious foundations) or state domain. But between 1925 - 1930 large tracts of these two categories were redistributed to the settled tribes on the basis of musha' (communal) tenure (ibid.:136). By that period, successive waves of tribal migration began to give the Valley a sedentary agricultural character. The Ottomans had settled Bahai's from Iran (at 'Adasiyyeh), Shishans from the Caucas regions (at Wadi al-Zarqa), and Zeinatis from Bisan, who had been displaced by Zionist land purchases in the north.